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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002932

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SUBJECT: MALIKI TALKS ON DOMESTIC POLITICS AND TURKISH PKK

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

**¶1.** (S//REL GBR AUS) SUMMARY: On August 10, the Prime Minister told the Ambassador that he had donated \$27,000 to a new party formed by 600 former Ba'athists who now support the GOI. He criticized CoR Speaker Mashhadani for not cooperating with the government. The PM alleged that MNF-I publicly released 189 detainees without his permission, and Shia promptly criticized the PM for "releasing terrorists while hitting Sadr City." (NOTE: MNF-I denies the PM's accusation. END NOTE.) The PM believes that Sadr will name Sadrists who fire rockets at the International Zone. The PM asserted that Iraq has closed the offices of the Turkish terrorist organization, PKK, and accepts the proposal of a trilateral conference with Turkey. END SUMMARY.

Domestic Politics

**¶2.** (S//REL GBR AUS) On Thursday, August 10, 2006, the Ambassador, accompanied by the Pol-Mil Counselor (notetaker), called on Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki at his Residence to discuss domestic politics. The Prime Minister enthusiastically welcomed the Ambassador's conversation with National Security Advisor (NSA) Dr. Rubaie about bringing together the main political groups to plan cooperatively to control violence. The leaders would be Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi (Sunni), Vice President Adel Abdel Mehdi (Shia from SCIRI), Deputy Prime Minister Barham Saleh (Kurd) and one Shia politician aligned with Moqtada al-Sadr. The Prime Minister said that Saturday (August 12) 600 Ba'athist officers will renounce violence, support the government, and form a new political party. To show his support, the PM had donated to the new group 40 million Iraqi Dinars (about USD 27,000). Next Saturday (August 19), a group of tribes will meet to show their support for the Iraqi Government.

PM Criticizes Mashhadani and Zubai

**¶3.** (S//REL GBR AUS) The PM noted that the Political Council for National Security (PCNS) had just criticized Council of Representatives (CoR) Speaker Mashhadani for not cooperating with the government. The PM pointed to three of Mashhadani's actions - his various counter-productive statements on regional issues, his visit to Syria without GOI approval, and his administering the CoR to delay government business. The PM added that Salam al-Zubai (the Sunni Deputy Prime Minister) similarly sets back the work of the government. The PM asserted that he relied on unity of government even more than on military operations to reduce violence and improve security.

MNF-I Allegedly Released Detainees Without PM's Approval

**¶4.** (S//REL GBR AUS) The PM said that during the following day's scheduled meeting with General Casey and the Ambassador, he intended to raise the issue of MNF-I's release

of 189 detainees under the banner of "supporting the Prime Minister's reconciliation program." He would have wanted to first look at their files, and then consider releasing them. The Shia are sensitive about detainee releases. Some Shia have criticized him, saying "you release terrorists, but yet you attack Sadr City." Today others criticized the release, which coincided with the deadly terrorist attack on Najaf. He wants future groups of detainees released in small groups, and without media attention. (NOTE: MNF-I did NOT put out any press releases during this period on the detainees' release or the Prime Minister's reconciliation program. There were actually about 500 detainees released during this period and the Prime Minister was notified in writing by General Casey about their release. Post found the information that the Prime Minister referenced in the Arabic Press without attribution. END NOTE.) However, the PM asked about a detainee, Ahmed Shaybani, who was found innocent by an Iraqi court, and yet still has not been released from MNF-I custody. (NOTE: Shaybani is part of a group of 35 Jaysh al-Madhi (JAM) indicted leaders whose case was dismissed in July by an Iraqi court; TF-134 submitted an appeal and continues to detain him. END NOTE.)

#### Sadr City Rockets Target the International Zone

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15. (S//REL GBR AUS) When the Ambassador raised the issue of recent rocket attacks on the International Zone originating from Sadr City, the PM was contradictory. The PM said his strategy is to isolate Moqtada al-Sadr (MAS) politically. In a meeting August 9, MAS assured the PM that he opposed rockets and similar operations. When the PM said that that MAS could not be silent on this issue, MAS replied that "we are innocent." The PM believes that MAS will report to him

BAGHDAD 00002932 002 OF 002

the names of the people in Sadr City who make and launch the rockets. He wants to avoid conflict with MAS. But, he was tough in saying that if any rockets were launched from houses in Sadr City, then MNF-I should immediately unleash a barrage of counterfire, even if that destroyed the houses of the attackers.

#### Opposing the PKK and Accepting a Trilateral Conference

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16. (S//REL GBR AUS) Responding to the Ambassador's question about the Turkish Kurdish terrorist organization, the PKK, the PM explained that the Iraqi Council of Ministers had settled Iraq's policy. Iraq does not want any terrorists on its soil, and it has closed PKK offices and asked the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to expel them from Iraqi territory. If individual PKK members seek refugee status in Iraq, that is acceptable. But the GOI cannot accept the PKK organization on its soil. Specifically, the PM agreed to the idea of a trilateral conference among Turkey and the US, and said he preferred an Iraqi Arab military officer to head of the Iraqi delegation, rather than an Iraqi Kurd.

#### A private "Iraq Airlines" and Boeing Aircraft

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17. (S//REL GBR AUS) The PM showed interest when the Ambassador suggested that organizing a private airline with minority Iraqi Government share-holding could provide a legal way around the debts that the previous state owned enterprise, Iraqi Airlines, still owes to Kuwait and London airports. The PM added that he has made statements that Iraq has no territorial claims on Kuwait, and would be willing to do that in writing. Iraqis are tired of violence, wars and adventures, and all they want is peace, he said.

KHALILZAD